



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Marisa Fink, Ed.D.
State Director
YMCA Youth and Government
541.530.3472
yandg2020@gmail.com

Alec Palm
75th Oregon Youth Governor
503.400.2905
yandg2020@gmail.com

Oregon Youth Legislature Convenes

YMCA Youth and Government Program hosts 75th Anniversary Legislative Session

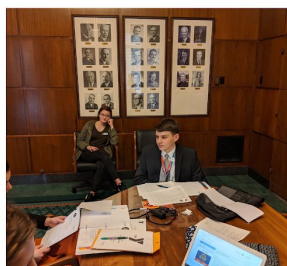
SALEM, OREGON (February 15, 2021) – High school youth from across the state will gather for a three-day virtual legislative session on February 18 - 20, 2021. True to the nationwide program's motto, "Democracy must be learned by each generation," participants will serve as delegates at this annual state conference, debating their bills on the virtual floor of the legislature. This YMCA youth program has the solitary distinction of being the only organization permitted to use the Oregon Capitol Senate and House Chambers, and the Governor's Ceremonial Signing Office. And although this year, the setting will be virtual, swearing in of the officers and the delegates will be conducted by Oregon Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Duncan, to add authenticity to the experience. Measures passed by youth delegates and signed by Youth Governor Palm will be sent to members of the Oregon Legislature with an official youth recommendation.



Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan will address the delegates during the joint opening session in the virtual House Chambers. Secretary Fagan, 39, is the youngest Oregon Secretary of State and the youngest elected Oregon official in a generation.



In the YMCA Youth and Government program, young people in grades 9 - 12 learn about the democratic system and are trained in parliamentary procedure, legislative committee process, debate, press relations, and lobbying techniques. Delegates learn by doing and have the opportunity to try their hand at leadership in an open and receptive learning environment advised by school teachers, YMCA staff, and alumni.



Caption: Images from the February 2020 Legislative Session at the State Capitol in Salem, Oregon.

This year delegates from across Oregon have brought measures regarding some of the states most pressing issues. Some examples include COVID-19 relief, black history education, police reform and changes to the state's constitution. The program was made possible in part by a Health Equity grant from the Oregon Health Authority and funding from the Oregon Alliance of YMCAs. The program also relies heavily, and gratefully, for the volunteer program committee, teachers, and alumni.

After committee sessions on Thursday, the legislative conference will be livestreamed on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3QNNTSSDv5bAybh19sseJg> beginning on Friday, February 19 at 10:00 am Pacific Time. Delegates will begin with our oldest tradition where members from the Youth Senate and House convene for the Youth Governor's inaugural address and swearing in ceremonies.

A media conference will be held on Monday, February 22, 2021 at 11:30 am via zoom:

<https://ymcaalliance.zoom.us/j/96642553346> Meeting ID: 966 4255 3346

One tap mobile +13462487799,,96642553346#

The media conference will be led by Youth Governor Palm who will discuss the measures signed and sent to members of the Oregon House and Senate with a youth recommendation.

"This year more than ever we have seen the profound value of YMCA Youth and Government. We are ensuring the foundations of democracy are learned and preserved through generations. The best way to defend democracy is to teach it to our future leaders." said Youth Governor Alec Palm, 18, of Salem, Oregon.

Marisa Fink, State Director of the Oregon YMCA Youth and Government program, said "students can increase their political awareness and understanding while learning the meaning of social action through an actual hands-on experience in government. The benefits of Youth and Government include gaining confidence, developing critical thinking skills, and understanding how to present ideas thoroughly and professionally - skills that will serve them throughout their lives."

You can follow our legislative process and view measures using our Trello,

<https://trello.com/youthandgovernment20202021>

You can watch the livestream of the opening and closing sessions and the House and Senate sessions on Friday, February 19 and Saturday, February 20 on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3QNNTSSDv5bAybh19sseJg>

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About the YMCA Youth and Government Program

YMCA Youth And Government is a 3-day experiential learning program in which students serve as part of a model state government, normally taking over the chambers of the Oregon State Senate and House to debate bills they have written. Students are offered the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of issues, develop critical thinking skills, and articulate their beliefs while engaging constructively with their peers from around the State.

About the YMCA

The YMCA is one of the area's largest nonprofits focused on engaging individuals and families in youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Y is dedicated to helping people achieve goals, make friends and find a true sense of belonging. Branches offer quality time for families to be together, resources for parents, and a variety of opportunities for seniors to be active. The YMCA ensures these opportunities are available to everyone no matter their ability to pay with generous support from community partners and donors. For more information about the Y, visit www.ymca.net